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*Addresses:* Orestes Martínez, Batey Caletón, Playa Larga, Ciénaga de Zapata, Matanzas, Cuba C.P. 43000, e-mail: [chino.zapata@gmail.com](mailto:chino.zapata@gmail.com). Lazaro Cotayo, Parque Nacional de Ciénaga de Zapata, Matanzas, Cuba. Arturo Kirkconnell, Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba, Obispo 61, La Habana, Cuba. James W. Wiley (corresponding author), P.O. Box 64, Marion Station, MD 21838, USA, e-mail: [jwwiley@mail.umes.edu](mailto:jwwiley@mail.umes.edu)

## The valid name of the Slaty-backed Flycatcher (previously, *sordida* Godwin-Austen, 1874, and *hodgsonii* J. P. Verreaux, 1871), and the gender of *Caffrornis*: comments on Zuccon (2011)

*by* Normand David & Murray Bruce

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In their study of members and relatives of *Ficedula* flycatchers, Outlaw & Voelker (2006) considered that genus *Muscicapella* Bianchi, 1907, which had been subsumed in *Niltava* Hodgson, 1837, by Watson (1986), but retained by other authors (e.g. Dickinson 2003, Clement 2006), should be placed within a broad genus *Ficedula* Brisson, 1760. As a result, *Nemura hodgsoni* [not *hodgsonii*], introduced by Moore, 1854 (*in* Horsfield & Moore 1854: 300), and the only species in *Muscicapella*, competes for precedence in *Ficedula* with *Siphia hodgsonii* (Slaty-backed Flycatcher), introduced by Verreaux ('1870' = 1871: 34). Verreaux's name, which was subsequently often misspelled '*hodgsoni*', is therefore a junior homonym under Art. 58.14 of the *International code of zoological nomenclature* (ICZN 1999), hereafter the Code, and requires reconsideration.

As set out by Watson (1986: 340), alternatives are available, as two new names had been coined for precisely the above eventuality: *Muscicapa amabilis* Deignan, 1947, and *Muscicapa erwini* Wolters, 1950, both *nomina nova* for *Siphia hodgsonii* J. P. Verreaux. Watson (1986: 339) also listed *Siphia erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, as an applicable name, prior to Verreaux's *hodgsonii*, but did not use it because he (p. 340) considered it to be preoccupied by *Siphia erythaca* Blyth, 1847. Outlaw & Voelker (2006), apparently seeing no clear homonymy between *erithacus* and *erythaca*, suggested that *erithacus* should be applied to the Slaty-backed Flycatcher. However, Zuccon (2011) stated that this did not appear to be correct.

Zuccon (2011) argued that *Siphia erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861 (*in* Blyth 1861: 201) is preoccupied by *Siphia erythaca* 'Jerdon' [= Blyth] (1847: 126), because they differ only in the use of *i* or *y* according to Art. 58.2 of the Code, and thus represent variant spellings. He added that the two names are primary homonyms (Art. 53.3.1) and that *Siphia erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, is invalid and unavailable. Zuccon then indicated that *Erythrosterna sordida*, introduced by Godwin-Austen (1874: 158), is the next available and valid name for Slaty-backed Flycatcher.

Treatment of *sordida* Godwin-Austen, and of *hodgsonii* J. P. Verreaux, has been somewhat chaotic. Sharpe (1879: 156) listed *Muscicapa sordida* (Godwin-Austen) and *Poliounyias 'hodgsoni'* (Verreaux) as separate species, whereas Oates (1883: 287), who thought *E. sordida* was probably the female of *P. hodgsoni* [sic], listed it under *Poliounyias 'hodgsoni'* (Verreaux). Later, Oates (1890: 14) treated *sordida* as a synonym of *Cyornis 'hodgsoni'* (Verreaux) whereas Sharpe (1901: 223), not 'Sharpe (1903)' as indicated by Zuccon (2011: 196), listed *sordida* as a synonym of *Poliounyias 'hodgsoni'* (Verreaux). The name *sordida* was not recorded by Watson (1986) because it already had been synonymised by Sharpe (1901). However, it was adopted by Dickinson & Christidis (2014: 605), who mistakenly referred to Zuccon & Ericson (2010), instead of Zuccon (2011), as the authority for using *sordida*.

We have revisited the issue and we conclude that Outlaw & Voelker (2006) were correct in accepting use of *erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, for Slaty-backed Flycatcher. Resolving the perceived homonymy is not straightforward. The key difference between *erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, and *erythaca* Blyth, 1847, currently a junior synonym of *Muscicapa mugimaki* Temminck, 1836, is not between *i* and *y*, but that between *-us* and *-a*. This is because they are two different nouns, not two adjectival words. Lewis & Short (1891: 657) indicated that *erithacus* is the Latin noun *erithacus* [unknown bird], and Liddell & Scott (1996: Suppl., p. 134) listed the noun ερυθάκος [unknown bird], which is Latinised with the *-a* ending (= *erythaca*). Just as adjectival species-group names such as *chineusis* and *sineusis* are not homonyms, neither are the nouns *erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, and *erythaca* Blyth, 1847, and they therefore do not fall under Art. 58.2, just like the nouns *consobriua* and *consobriuus*. As a result, the combination *Ficedula erithacus* (Jerdon & Blyth, 1861) must be accepted as the valid name of Slaty-backed Flycatcher.<sup>1</sup>

We also take this opportunity to point out that Zuccon (2011: 197) erred in stating that the genus '*Caffroruis* Roberts, 1922 ... is masculine'. Genus-group names ending in the Greek noun ορνις, which is masculine as well as feminine (Liddell & Scott 1996), must be assigned gender according to Art. 30.1.4.2 of the Code: they are masculine unless combined with a feminine adjectival species-group name when originally established. According to Jobling (2010: 83), *caffer* is adjectival, with the feminine ending *-ra*. Because Roberts (1922: 232) used the combination C[*affroruis*] *caffra* in the original description of *Caffroruis* without specifying genus gender, as well as *Caffroruis caffra nanuaqueusis* W. L. Sclater, 1911 (p. 233), *Caffroruis* Roberts is feminine.

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<sup>1</sup>*Siphia erithacus* Jerdon & Blyth, 1861, must not be confused with *Siphia erithacus*, introduced by Sharpe (1888: 199), but clearly unavailable. The latter was listed as *Cyornis erythaca* [sic] by Sharpe (1901: 217), but correctly by Watson (1986: 349) under *platenae* Blasius, 1888, which has priority.

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- Addresses:* Normand David, 202-53 Hasting, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Quebec, Canada, H9G 3C4, e-mail: normanddavid@videotron.ca. Murray Bruce, P.O. Box 180, Turrumurra 2074, NSW, Australia, e-mail: m.d.bruce@hotmail.com